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**Subject:** The ripple effect of the Colorado mine spill

I guess this is just one of the ripple effects of the Colorado mine spill. It has invigorated others to demand better and bigger clean ups in their area so that they do not experience a similar incident. Also, these smaller town newspapers have some very creative writers. The "whipping-post EPA" sentence is a gem.

From the Montana Standard

## Opinion: The River of Lost Souls: A lesson for EPA in Butte

According to legend the Spanish originally named the Animas River "Rio de las Animas Perdidas" — the River of Lost Souls. How distressingly prescient.

Could there be a more vivid, chromatic reminder of what we have to lose?

No, for visual emphasis it's pretty tough to beat a river of bright yellow sludge.

What a metaphor for all we have done to this West — and what a symbol of the inadequacy of good intentions.

This poor hapless whipping-post EPA has been pilloried by the industries it must stand against, bled by budget-cutters of both mindless and Machiavellian breed, reviled by often ill-informed people it has come belatedly to protect, and saddest of all betrayed repeatedly by spineless and politicized bureaucrats. Now, add "river-killer" to the inaccurate invective hurled its way.

This, despite the truth: The Animas region had fought not to be declared an EPA Superfund site, and management of the problems from more than a century of mine waste had been turned over to locals, with disastrous results. In fact, the EPA had recommended against the cessation of water treatment and plugging of an abandoned mine that greatly worsened the Animas' problems in recent years.

What has happened to the Animas River and in turn the great San Juan, sacred to the Navajo and incidentally one of the West's great tailwater fisheries, after workers under EPA direction breached a tailings impoundment is obscene. It should also be a clarion call to the EPA not to give up on Butte, where it actually does have a measure of control and responsibility.

Here, the EPA must admit it has made a huge mistake in the country's largest Superfund site, and take steps to force the removal of the Parrot tailings, the Diggings East, the Northside Tailings and the Blacktail berm from the heart of Butte.

And when that's done, it must join all the stakeholders — yes, all, Butte-Silver Bow — to come up with a workable storm water plan that can withstand rigorous scientific scrutiny. Simply, a plan that will keep major storm events from doing lasting damage to the newly cleaned up Silver Bow Creek.

Old-timers tell us the lower creek and the Clark Fork River used to run red as radiator water, and many times as toxic. Now, these waters actually support aquatic life; but anybody who thinks these great streams — tributaries to the Columbia just as the Animas is a tributary to the Colorado — aren't still at risk either doesn't understand that water runs downhill or didn't see last week's news.

The EPA should absolutely not be blamed for the disaster on the Animas.

Butte? That's a stream of a different color.

## Groups plan rally to support removal of Parrot

# tailings

August 11, 2015 10:30 pm • [Susan Dunlap susan.dunlap@mtstandard.com](mailto:Susan Dunlap susan.dunlap@mtstandard.com)

While the Environmental Protection Agency, Butte-Silver Bow, the state of Montana and Atlantic Richfield continue to discuss the fate of the underground Parrot plume in confidential negotiations, local groups rally to support removal of the toxic mine tailings.

Seven groups, headed by Project Green, are planning a rally to restore Silver Bow Creek at 6 p.m. Thursday. The event will begin at the locomotive south of the Butte Civic Center, 1340 Harrison Avenue. A stroll will then commence along the Parrot corridor toward the Visitor's Center. A trolley will take participants back to their vehicles at the Civic Center after the rally ends.

Representatives from the Butte Natural Resource Damage Council, the Clark Fork Watershed Education Program, and Butte Citizens Technical Environmental Committee will be on hand to talk about the contamination and show conceptual renderings of the current proposal to clean it up.

Northey Tretheway, president of Project Green, said the rally is important because the future of the community resides on people coming together over this issue.

"Butte has a lot of pride in its history and what this town represents to the state and to the country," Tretheway said. "But we have to have pride not just in what it's been, but in its future, in making this one of the more livable communities."

The Parrot plume has long been a point of contention between EPA and Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The plume is the result of underground tailings from decades of smelting and copper precipitation work dating back to the late 1800s. The site of the former Parrot Smelter is where the ball field is located behind the Civic Center today.

The EPA says an underground system already in place is adequate to capture all of the contaminated groundwater flowing to Blacktail and Silver Bow creeks. The capture system includes a pipe with holes in it that lies 5 feet below the surface. The state says the Parrot plume is about 50 feet deep, and given the plume's depth, the five-foot deep pipe can't capture it all.

Rich Day, president of the George Grant Chapter of Trout Unlimited - one of the 7 groups participating in the rally - called the EPA's capture system "a band-aid on a severed head."

Day pointed to the toxic water full of heavy metals now flowing through the Animas River as an example of what might happen to Silver Bow Creek if something isn't done about the corridor of contamination that lies from the Civic Center to the Visitor's Center. The Animas River spill started near Durango, Colo., and is now flowing through northwest New Mexico. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that more than 3 million gallons spilled from the long-defunct Gold King Mine north of Durango. New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez declared a state of emergency as the mustard-colored water continues to head unabated downstream. No one yet knows the long-term side effects of that toxic spill.

"Given what's happening in (the Animas) River ... it makes sense to (clean up the Parrot corridor), it's common sense," Day said.